

Agency: 495 Department of Agriculture

Decision Package Code/Title: N3 Increase Food Assistance Funding

Budget Period: 2015-17

Budget Level: PL - Performance Level

Recommendation Summary Text:

This proposal would add \$800,000 (annually) in state general fund support for the emergency food system through WSDA's Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP). The proposal essentially transitions the one-time allocation of an equal amount in the 2014 Supplemental Budget into ongoing base funding. Even with the additional \$800,000 allotted for the current fiscal year, when comparing this year to last year, there is about 1 pound less of emergency food available to an average family per visit to their food pantry. This additional funding provides about 2.1 million meals per year for our most vulnerable Washingtonians.

Fiscal Detail

Operating Expenditures	<u>FY 2016</u>	<u>FY 2017</u>	<u>Total</u>
001-1 General Fund - Basic Account-State	800,000	800,000	1,600,000
Total Cost	800,000	800,000	1,600,000

Package Description:

About one in five Washingtonians rely on the emergency food system that is directly supported by WSDA resources. Food Assistance Program food pantries provided over 134 million pounds of food to clients in FY 2014. This is the equivalent of almost 90 million meals to feed Washington's hungry. Providers served 1.4 million people who visited an average of 6.3 times per year, for a total of 8.7 million visits. This is an increase of 4% in visits from the previous year and an increase of 45% since 2007. In 2014, 35% of visits were children aged 18 and under, and 20% were seniors aged 55 and older. Compared to the previous year, the pounds per client available with each visit decreased in 2014 from 15.84 lbs to 15.41 lbs. For an average family of 3 making 6 visits per year to their local food pantry, that means 6 fewer pounds of food per year - at current program funding levels.

Thanks to the generosity of food donors, our state's food pantries are able to provide a typical meal for an average cost of just \$0.37. The conservative donation value of the same typical meal is \$2.49 - giving the state an opportunity to invest in an emergency food system that is leveraging its resources to provide more than six times their original value.

Increased funding of \$800,000 annually will support the emergency food system through our state funded Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP). The majority of this funding will be passed through to over 330 local food providers. A small amount will support pilot projects in the emergency food system and the agricultural community. The proposed increase would mean over 2.1 million more meals available for our most vulnerable Washingtonians. This funding increase would enhance the ability of food providers to provide not just more food but more nutritious food.

Narrative Justification and Impact Statement

What specific performance outcomes does the agency expect?

The expected outcomes of the proposal are:

- * To provide critical funding support to food banks and food pantries that are struggling to fill the growing "hunger" gap as more low-income people are relying on them to provide more food just to get by.
- * Increase the amount of healthier food options being made to low-income families through food banks, food pantries and meal programs. This supports Governor's Goal # 4: Healthy and Safe Communities.
- * Develop critical pilots and partnerships that increase our collective efforts to eliminate hunger, increase healthier food options and enhance the purchasing and donating relationships between the agricultural community and the emergency food system.

Performance Measure Detail

Activity:

Incremental Changes

No measures submitted for package

Is this decision package essential to implement a strategy identified in the agency's strategic plan?

This proposal supports WSDA's mission to serve the people of Washington by supporting the agricultural community and promoting consumer and environmental protection. It is our role to defend the safety, integrity, and availability of our food system; the emergency food system is critical to a healthy food system.

Does this DP provide essential support to one or more of the Governor's Results Washington priorities?

This proposal is in alignment with, and supports Goal 4: Healthy and Safe Communities of the Governor's priorities that focus on ensuring all Washingtonians are healthy, safe, and supported. WSDA's indicator for Goal 4 focuses on increasing the percentage of healthier food options being offered to low-income children and families through food pantries, farmers markets, and meal programs by 5% from 2014 baseline by 2017.

What are the other important connections or impacts related to this proposal?

In FY 2014 tribes provided almost 29,000 people with food from their food banks (including new and returning clients). Because tribes have so few resources for these programs, the number of people they serve is directly proportional to the funding they receive from EFAP, making an increase in funding extremely important to them.

As reductions to the safety net continue in the state and federal arenas low-income families will turn to food pantries for help more often. We have been working with our partner agencies (DOH, DSHS, and OSPI) to determine what the impact of additional support will mean for the client.

The importance of the increased funding cannot be overstated when addressing the ability of food providers to meet the reporting requirements and the improved client outcomes referenced in Goal 4, which focuses on increasing the amount of healthier food options being offered to clients.

What alternatives were explored by the agency, and why was this alternative chosen?

With reductions in federal funding and reductions in other safety net assistance programs, a negative impact on food pantries is inevitable and there are few if any alternatives left in assisting families in need of food assistance.

What are the consequences of adopting or not adopting this package?

If this proposal is not funded, less food will be available for Washingtonians in need of food assistance, including foods which are considered healthier. Food providers' ability to provide enough food and maintain the same level of access would be compromised.

Providers are reporting that flexible funding is declining, while expenses (like food, storage, trucking, and fuel) and client need continue to rise.

This is a conservative proposal given the fact that the pounds of food per person per visit decreased by 0.4 pounds in 2014. For an average size family that makes 6 visits per year to their local food pantry, that means 6 fewer pounds of food per year. Restoring this lost food would require increased annual funding of \$935,518. This figure conservatively assumes no increase in the total number of visits, which is unlikely given recent upward trends.

What is the relationship, if any, to the state's capital budget?

None

What changes would be required to existing statutes, rules, or contracts, in order to implement the change?

None

Expenditure and revenue calculations and assumptions

This proposal is strictly for pass-through to emergency food providers.

Which costs and functions are one-time? Which are ongoing? What are the budget impacts in future biennia?

All costs are assumed to be ongoing.

<u>Object Detail</u>	<u>FY 2016</u>	<u>FY 2017</u>	<u>Total</u>
N Grants, Benefits & Client Services	800,000	800,000	1,600,000